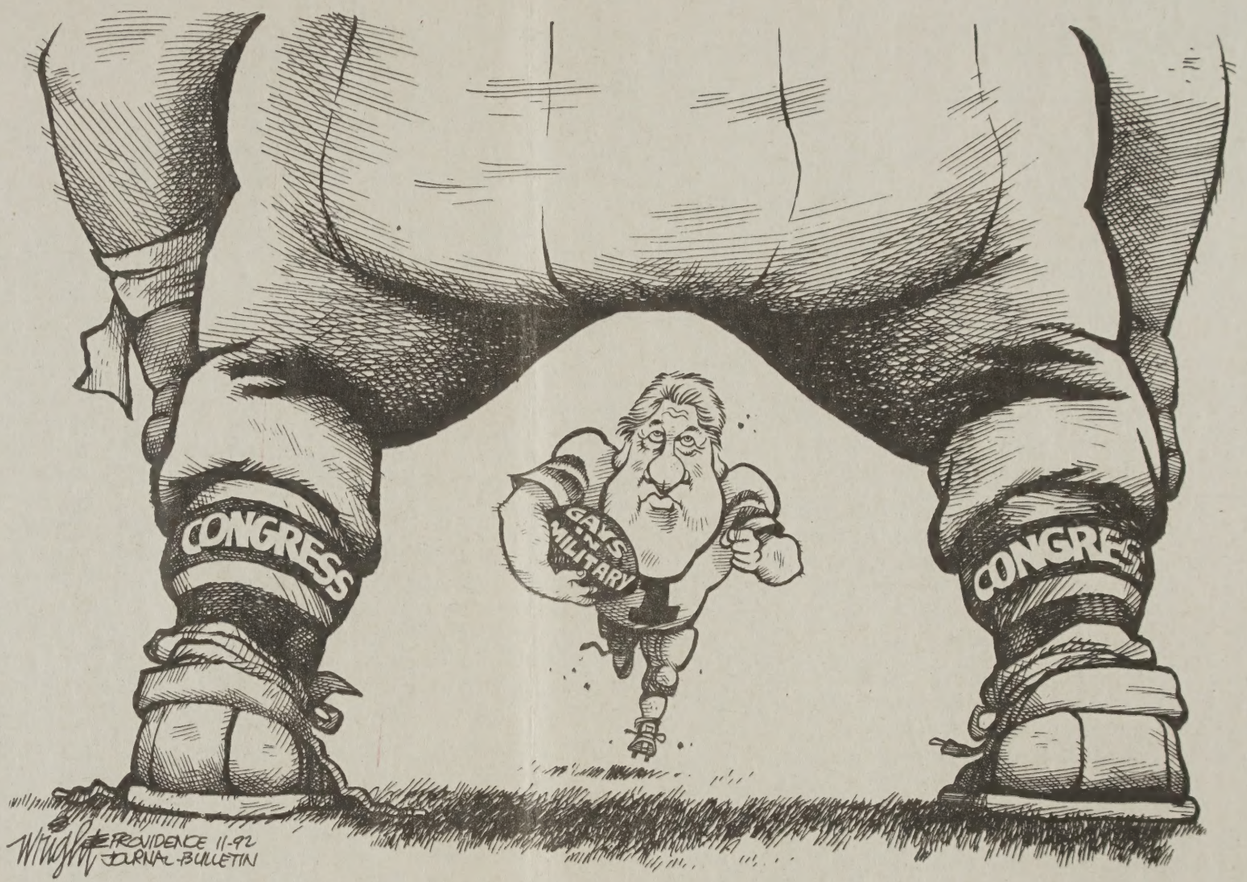
JOSPEH SOBRAN

Pledge to gays will dog Commander-in-Chief Clinton



Bill Clinton's pledge of "immediate repeal" of the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces was a bit of sleazy pandering. And it was a serious gaffe for him to reaffirm that pledge as his first gesture as prospective commander in chief.

Americans despise "politicians"; the word itself is derisive. They don't like to think of their president as a mere "politician." They prefer a leader who seems "above" politics — a symbol of national unity, like a British monarch, who seems at least partly aloof from the squabbles of contending interests because he is the guardian of a larger national interest.

The role of commander in chief of the armed forces is closely tied to this quasi-monarchical symbolism. The armed forces are the one sector of the government that is "above" politics. They stand ready to defend us, ever loyal to their commander in chief, utterly indifferent to partisan concerns, "semper fi." The legitimacy of the federal government, tattered in so many ways, ultimately rests on the popular faith that for all its defects, it will protect us from enemies.

This popular faith involves reverence for "our fighting men" and special respect for veterans. Americans may have had their doubts about the Gulf War, but once it started, the overwhelming sentiment was summed up in the words "support our troops." And George Bush's approval rating soared to record heights (fatally deluding him about his real popularity) during the months when he was seen principally as commander in chief.

Any president's popularity depends heavily on his plausibility as commander in chief. From Washington to Eisenhower, war heroes have found the presidency an easy catch. By the same token, those who couldn't play the role of commander in chief acceptably have found themselves in trouble. Harry Truman gravely damaged his presidency when he fired a hero who towered over him in popular esteem, Douglas MacArthur. Jimmy Carter shrank to risibility when he seemed unable to cope with enemies abroad. And Michael Dukakis was finished when he was seen playing Snoopy in that tank.

Bill Clinton is already close to the Dukakis end of the scale. Never having served in the armed forces — having, in fact, taken extraordinary measures to avoid service — he has shown contempt for the soldier's code and insensitivity to the soldier's way of life. It seems nobody has explained to him that soldiers don't like to take showers with the kind of guys who like to take showers with soldiers. It hasn't crossed his mind that barracks life is cramped enough without adding the explosive element of sexual attraction — which, after all, is why women, even in "today's Army," are housed in separate barracks from men.

Usually a shrewd pol, the president-elect has shown a profound blindness to the symbolism at stake here. Even before taking office, he has angered the greatest and most indispensable asset any president has. He has affronted men, from Colin Powell to the humblest grunt, whose unquestioning loyalty would have been his automatically.

Clinton has also aggravated special vulnerabilities of his own. He is widely seen as nothing more than a career politician of dubious ethics and morals. He is in no position to disrupt long-held traditions by introducing countercultural New Morality into the military life for the purpose of paying off a special interest that supported his candidacy. And he has subtly underscored doubts about his character, which his fawning press has been unable to dispel. Nobody suggests that "semper fi" would be particularly appropriate as his personal motto.

So he has blundered by politicizing, for narrow advantage, a traditionally apolitical institution that is far more popular and respected than he is. If anyone could have effected such a change in the moral and virile ethos of the armed forces without stirring deep-seated opposition, it was not an outsider with such weak credentials as Clinton's.

Sensing that his presumption has antagonized both the military and popular sentiment, the president-elect is backing off from his "immediate repeal" pledge. But he has already defined himself as an odd sort of commander in chief — one who was prepared to declare cultural war on his own troops.

Sobran is a syndicated columnist.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Popular myths cloud JFK story

The disposition to traffic in disinformation is alarming in any society that sort of mushes along on the proposition that ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

It is recorded, for instance, that two-thirds of the American people are now convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald was not the sole assassin in Dallas, and conceivably he was not. What he was, though, is the man who fired the fatal bullet. The fundamental work of the Warren Commission has not been discredited.

And yet we gentlemen of the press have lately received a videotape of the next version of who really killed John F. Kennedy. Since I need to look at something to relieve my distress when in the morning I walk on my treadmill, I looked at this creation, which begins by telling us that official America conspired to frame Oswald in order to rein in the big secret (we are not told what the big secret was). And then we go through it all.

Just for instance, the Zapruder shot is shown yet again that registers JFK's neck jolting aft when a bullet shot was fired. And the solemn narrator tells you that that phenomenon alone absolutely establishes that there had to be a gunman at the grassy knoll ahead of him.

Not three seconds are given to reporting the pathologists' commentary that a bullet entering the back of the neck can cause a rearward contraction, which would absolutely account for the movements photographed by Zapruder.

What dismays is the relative docility of the engines of public opinion. In recent months and years an effort has been made to sort of detach JFK from the Vietnam War. We have all heard the general theme, and after a bar or two ("Jackie-boy/And Vietnam/Weren't made for each Camelot histo-

STATE

Biggest Amendment 2 drive donor named

Complaint yields identity of Michigan man

By **Louis Aguilar**/Gazette Telegraph

A suburban Detroit man was identified Tuesday as the person who gave the largest donation — $50,000 — to a Colorado Springs-based group that authored the controversial Amendment 2.

Len Simons of Romulus, Mich., sought to give the money anonymously because he feared a "violent response" by critics who consider the amendment discriminatory toward gays and lesbians, according to documents filed with the elections and licensing division of the Colorado secretary of state's office.

The constitutional amendment, approved by voters Nov. 3, prohibits state and local governments from passing laws that bar discrimination based on sexual orientation. It also repealed such ordinances in Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

Simons' contribution amounted to 14 percent of the $349,253 given to Colorado for Family Values for its campaign. The contribution also was double the amount of the second-largest donation received by the group. Simons couldn't be reached for comment Tuesday.

He agreed to reveal his identity after the group that worked against the passage of the amendment, the Equal Protection Campaign, filed a complaint with the secretary of state's office in October. It said the anonymous donation violated state campaign contribution laws. The Equal Protection Campaign raised $429,717, with its single biggest donation — $58,000 — coming from Dr. Lyda Herloff of Denver.

> Simons' contribution amounted to 14 percent of the $349,253 given to Colorado for Family Values for its campaign.

The Michigan man originally had the money given Colorado for Family Values sent to the Bethesda Foundation of Nebraska, a subsidiary of Colorado Springs-based Bethesda Associates, a Christian evangelical business group.

In September, Simons sent the $50,000 check to the Bethesda Foundation, which deposited it in its general checking account at Norwest Bank in Colorado Springs. A check was then written from that account to Colorado for Family Values. Another unit of Bethesda Associates, Bethesda Outreach Ministries, made a separate $10,000 donation to Colorado for Family Values.

Bethesda officials declined to comment, and Colorado for Family Values spokesman Kevin Tebedo couldn't be reached Tuesday.

According to a copy of the letter Bethesda wrote to the secretary of state's office, Simons didn't want his name connected to the contribution "in anticipation of the kind of violent response that took place following the passage of Amendment 2."

Numerous protests have been held in Denver after the passage of Amendment 2, including one in which a group entered Democratic Party headquarters on election night. In Colorado Springs, there have been no reports of vandalism or attacks against supporters or opponents of Amendment 2, police said.

Since the passing of Amendment 2, the Denver Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Denver has reported to police 43 hate crimes directed against homosexuals. Before the Amendment 2 campaign began, there were usually less than 10 incidents reported a month, center officials said.

Officials said the most recent incidents include the vandalizing of a classroom at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts with slurs directed at gays and several bomb threats to Denver-area bookstores and the Denver Gay and Lesbian Community Center.

BRIEFING

District violated law, Meyer says: The Fort Lupton Re-8 School District violated campaign laws by printing and distributing a newsletter urging voters to pass a sales tax for education in the Nov. 3 general election, Secretary of State Natalie Meyer has said.

State law prohibits governmental bodies from spending public money to support or oppose election issues.

Meyer announced her finding against the district Monday. The Colorado attorney general's office must decide what steps to take against the district.

Staffers say panel can increase fees: The Legislature's Joint Budget Committee will not have to get voter approval of fee increases — including college tuition increases — despite passage of Amendment 1, staff analysts said. However, they noted the lid placed on overall state spending means raising the revenue wouldn't necessarily let the state spend it.

Amendment 1, passed by voters Nov. 3, requires voter approval for certain state and local tax revenue increases and debt, and restricts property, income and other taxes. It also limits the rate of increase in state and local government spending, and requires initiative and referendum elections on all major spending.

Kenneth Conahan, who directs the budget committee staff, also said there appear to be areas where the Legislature's good-faith analysis of Amendment 1 doesn't match interpretations by its author, Colorado Springs landlord Douglas Bruce.

"We're going with our own interpretation, regardless of what he (Bruce) might say his intent was," Conahan said.

Former TV weatherman critical: Former KUSA-TV weatherman Leon "Stormy" Rottman remained in critical condition Tuesday at Denver General Hospital.

Rottman, 74, was admitted Friday after he collapsed with bleeding between the brain and the skull.

He spent nearly two decades as a weatherman on Channel 9. He suffered the hemorrhage during a taping Friday of Senior Showcase for KRMA, Channel 6.

Gazette Telegraph news services

FOR THE RECORD

VITAL STATISTICS

BIRTHS

PENROSE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

GALLEGOS: Daniel and Lisa, Woodland Park, a girl, Nov. 7.

DAVIS-DOUGLAS: Kevin Davis and Michele Douglas, Colorado Springs, a girl, Nov. 7.

CAMPBELL: Randy and Janet, Colorado Springs, a girl, Nov. 7.

WICK: John and Tracy, Colorado Springs, a girl, Nov. 7.

MATON: Larry and Judith, Colorado Springs, a boy, Nov. 8.

DALLAS: John and Michele, Colorado Springs, a girl, Nov. 8.

ROESNER: Kelly, Colorado Springs, a boy, Nov. 8

TERAN: Ray

BULLETIN BOARD

D-11 seeks budget reviewers: Colorado Springs School District 11 seeks volunteers to serve for one or two years on a committee that reviews its budget. The group, part of the Advisory Accountability Committee, looks at budgets for individual schools and recommends priorities for spending that eventually will be presented to the school board.

Applicants must be District 11 residents. Some experience in finance or developing and analyzing budgets is preferable. Committee members proba-

2077 for information and applications.

Booster band to rehearse: The Pikes Peak Booster Band will hold its first practice for the Festival of Lights Parade at 6 p.m. today at Doherty High School, 4515 Barnes Road. Call 550-0174 for information.

Germans from Russia to meet: The American Historical S

6475 or 591-2638 for information.

Library to move, get new name: The Broadmarket Square Library will close at 5 p.m. Saturday. It will reopen under a new name, the Cheyenne Mountain Library, on Dec. 3 at 1791-D S. Eighth St., just south of its present location. Call 531-6333, extension 1200, for information.